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homemakers' chat

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U. S. DEPARTMENT
OF AGRICULTURE

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SUBJECT: "FOOD-SHOPPING TIPS." Information from marketing specialists of the U. S. Department of Agriculture.

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Once more here's news of food for the housewife who plans the family's meals and does the marketing. Here's news of supplies of food on the market now--or coming later, and news also of prices.

Maybe you think it's early to begin talking about food for '42, but marketing specialists of the U. S. Department of Agriculture are already making predictions about the new year. They say this country will hit a new high record in food production if farmers achieve the agricultural goals set by the Department. These goals provide for many more dairy and poultry products, meats and seeds used in making oils as well as slightly more fresh vegetables. These extra supplies of food will be for use in this country; for shipping abroad under lend-lease arrangements; and for building up our reserve stocks. In spite of this outlook for record food production, you can expect to pay more for food in '42 than in '41 on an average.

Now news of different foods on the market this fall. Vegetables aren't so numerous as they were a year ago. Fewer fresh vegetables combined with higher consumer incomes naturally mean higher prices than a year ago. During the next few months more hardy vegetables--like cabbage, onions and celery will be coming to market. And supplies of tender vegetables like peas and lima beans will become smaller. Compared to last fall the markets will have more carrots, more green peas and tomatoes, but fewer beets, cabbage, onions and less celery and lettuce.

The season for brussel sprouts has opened and more sprouts will be coming to market for the next few months. These miniature cabbages are generally most plentiful from October through December. The sprout season doesn't usually end until March.

When you are buying sprouts, look for those that are firm, compact, and of a good green color.

The cauliflower season also is underway. Many more cauliflowers will be coming to market the next two and a half months, and this should mean lower prices. Usually the peak season for cauliflower on the market is October and November. Supplies this year probably will be larger than usual. Look for cauliflower with a solid, heavy, creamy white or white head and with flower clusters closely united.

The news about potatoes is much the same. The outlook still is for more sweet potatoes and fewer white potatoes than last winter. Very shortly now will be peak season for harvesting potatoes when prices usually are lowest for the season.

Now from vegetables let's turn to fruits. Total supplies of fruit in this country have been larger this fall, especially apples and peaches. During October fewer oranges and peaches will be coming to market, and more apples and grapes.

News just in about cranberries sounds as if you'd have plenty of cranberry sauce for Thanksgiving and Christmas--and then some. The cranberry season runs from September through January. The current crop is about a hundred thousand barrels larger than last year's crop, and promises to be the sixth largest on record. The peak season for cranberry marketing is usually November. Cranberries vary in size and color according to variety. Top-quality cranberries are plump, firm and have a high luster.

Now let's move on to news of eggs. Egg prices are still due to go up this month. Eggs are usually most expensive in November, but they may not go up this fall as much as usual. However, the price of eggs probably will continue well above a year ago and may possibly be the highest for this time of year since 1930. Hens are laying more eggs now than a year ago and they'll probably go on laying more through the winter unless the winter is unusually cold. Whether this will mean more eggs for

American breakfasts will depend on how many eggs we ship abroad under lend-lease efforts.

Americans have used about the same amount of butter during the past year as they did in 1940, even though a great deal more butter has been produced in this country. As a result, stocks of butter in storage have gone up more than usual and are relatively high for this time of year. This butter from storage usually moves to retail stores for sale between September and March. The current storage supply situation may result in a less-than-usual price advance during the remainder of the year. But the price of butter will still be higher than it has been in recent years.

Now about cheese. The production of American cheese for the rest of this year will be much larger than last year, but the price of cheese will continue to be high. Wholesale prices of cheese have gone up 70 percent since March of this year, yet current stocks of American cheese are the largest on record.

Now for meat news. More lamb will be coming to market all this month and supplies of lamb will be larger than last year at this time. Yet the price of lamb will continue to be higher than it was a year ago.

You can expect to see the price of pork drop very shortly. The price of pork has gone up steadily since the early part of the year. The downswing in price will begin when pigs born last spring start coming into market in volume--and that will be any time now. Generally, pork costs most on retail markets in September, and then declines from October through the early part of the new year. Even though prices will go down considerably, they won't go down as low as they were a year ago.

That concludes the food-shopping tips for today. More in a couple of weeks.

